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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 07/13/09

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ARTICLES:

(1) PM Aso decides to dissolve Diet on July 21, hold election on August 30

SANKEI ONLINE
12:37, July 13, 2009

Prime Minister Taro Aso indicated his intention to dissolve the House of Representatives at an emergency Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) executive meeting held at the Prime Minister's Official Residence in the afternoon of July 13. He also conveyed the same intention at a liaison meeting between the government and the ruling parties held after the LDP meeting. He plans to dissolve the Diet on July 21, and the official declaration of candidacy for the Lower House election will be scheduled for August 18, with the election being held on August 30.

Secretary General Hiroyuki Hosoda, Election Strategy Council Chairman Makoto Koga, Hidehisa Otsuji, chair of the LDP caucus in the House of Councillors, and others were present at the emergency LDP executive meeting.

(2) Aso will not budge on his decision to dissolve Lower House on own initiative

ASAHI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
Jul7 13, 2009

Prime Minister Taro Aso yesterday stayed in his official residence

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all the day, except for his routine walk around the residential quarters. He made no comment on the result of the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election. There were no politicians, including senior ruling coalition members, who visited his residential quarters. Aso has not changed his intention to dissolve the House of Representatives on his own initiative, according to Aso's aide.

At a press conference on July 10, the last day of the Group of Eight (G-8) summit, Aso stated: "I will soon make a decision" as to when to dissolve the Lower House.

The reason for Aso having repeatedly stated that he will dissolve the lower chamber on his own initiative is his aim to seek to constrain the anti-Aso movements.

Aso is proud that the public does not sympathize with the drive to remove him from office because there are no strong candidates to replace him in the LDP. In a poll conducted in early July by the Asahi Shimbun, 65 percent of respondents said that they did not understand the moves to unseat Aso as prime minister, while 22 percent responded that they understood them.

However, senior party members and faction leaders, who have supported Aso heads, have become increasingly alarmed that the LDP cannot fight in the general election under Aso's leadership. There is a possibility that Aso will be unable to ignore opinions in the LDP.

Aso was given an advice by his aide that Lower House dissolution should be delayed in order to pursue the political donation scandal involving Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) President Yukio Hatoyama. The aim is to get ready to fight in the general election by pursuing the Hatoyama issue while putting off dissolution until July 28 when the current Diet session expires. However, there is no guarantee that the situation will take a turn for the better, but there is a risk that the calls for replacing Aso will gain greater strength.

(3) LDP shocked by defeat in Tokyo assembly election; Move to remove Aso from office gaining momentum

ASAHI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
July 13, 2009

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its coalition partner

New Komeito lost a majority in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly, in yesterday's election, a prelude to the next House of Representatives election. Although many in the ruling parties believe that they cannot contest the general election under Prime Minister Aso's leadership, Aso has not budged from a stance of seeking an early dissolution of the Lower House. Can Aso cut through the center of the issue, while the noose is tightening around him? The political situation has become tense in a stroke.

Former LDP Secretary General Tsutomu Takebe said last night in an interview by the Asahi Shimbun:

"It is an historical crushing defeat. The best way would be for Mr. Aso to say, 'Let's hold a Liberal Democratic Party presidential election after the Diet session adjourns?' This week will be a critical juncture as to whether the party will split."

Takebe indicated his view that a conclusion will be reached before

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the end of this week as to whether Aso would dissolve the Lower House or whether he would be forced to quit his post as prime minister. (TN: Aso announced July 13 that he will dissolve the Lower House on July 21)

Anti-Aso groups have refrained from criticizing the Prime Minister, wary that the responsibility for the loss in the Tokyo race would be shifted onto them. However, former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki and other junior and mid-level LDP lawmakers got together last night and confirmed that they would call for holding a general meeting of all LDP members to analyze the party's successive defeats in recent local elections.

Many senior members of the LDP and factions are desperately trying to prevent an early Lower House dissolution, expecting that the headwind against the party will weaken. Former Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori met on July 9 with former LDP Upper House Chairman Mikio Aoki. The two shared the perception that it would be difficult for Aso to dissolve the Lower House immediately after the Tokyo assembly election. The secretaries general of the LDP factions shared the view that the Lower House should not be dissolved before July 28 when the current Diet session ends.

A sense of alarm has risen in the New Komeito, as well. A senior New Komeito member already predicted yesterday afternoon the ruling parties' defeat in the election, indicating that the party's determination to urge Aso to put off dissolution. The New Komeito hopes that the Lower House will be dissolved at the end of the ongoing Diet session and the general election will be held on Aug. 30. There are a growing number of cabinet ministers deserting Aso. One cabinet minister made this comment: "Most party members want (the Prime Minister) to voluntarily step down. Not only anti-Aso groups but party members with good sense think so." Another cabinet member said:

"It's a crushing defeat. (The Prime Minister) will not be able to dissolve the Lower House. The New Komeito at least will not sign on. I will discuss the matter with other cabinet members. I think several cabinet ministers will not sign."

Can Aso dissolve the Lower House even if he replaces some cabinet members? The dominant view in the LDP is that "It is not so easy to dissolve the Lower House" (former prime minister). One of influential lawmakers who have supported Aso remarked last night: "Now that I will give no advice to him."

However, it is true that there are no specific ways to replace Aso.

(4) DPJ unveils its administrative vision designed to establish national strategy bureau directly under prime minister and an committee of cabinet ministers to eliminate bureaucratic sectionalism

An outline of the Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ) government organization reform plan became clear on July 11. The plan is designed to establish a national strategy bureau under the direct control of the prime minister and a committee of a small number of cabinet ministers with the aim of strengthening the politician-led decision-making system, if it takes over the reins of government.

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The plan, compiled by President Yukio Hatoyama, will go into the party's manifesto for the next House of Representatives election.

According to the plan, the national strategy bureau will be set up at the Prime Minister's Official Residence staffed by members from ministries, agencies, and the private sector. The bureau will be responsible for drawing up national strategies, including diplomatic plans. It will also present budgetary outlines that meet national strategies prior to the Finance Ministry drawing up a state budget. The Council on Fiscal and Economic Policy will be abolished as its functions are likely to overlap with those of the national strategic bureau.

The panel of cabinet ministers will allow policies to be discussed by a small group of ministers directly connected to each individual issue. The DPJ hopes this approach will help eliminate harmful effects of bureaucratic sectionalism. The committee will be modeled after a similar system in Britain. The present system of administrative vice ministers' meetings will not be abolished, but their functions will be reviewed to prevent them from holding meetings to make adjustments ahead of cabinet meetings.

The DPJ also plans to set up an administrative reform panel to review the overall administrative procedures to find wasteful spending and irregularities. The panel will be responsible for scrutinizing all budgets and systems and urging each ministry or agency to correct inappropriate procedures.

The plan is also intended to alter the current system in which the ruling party is allowed to play a central role in the policymaking process. Specifically, the ruling party policy research council will be abolished, while about 100 lawmakers will be posted within the government to serve as ministerial aides in addition to the cabinet minister, vice minister and parliamentary secretary who are currently serving at each ministry.

These three individuals will formulate and make decisions on policies at each ministry and agency. A DPJ government aims at a system in which the cabinet decides on matters in an integrated manner under the initiative of lawmakers.

(5) U.S. Consul General in Okinawa Kevin Maher says in pre-departure press conference that detailed reversion plan will be announced soon

OKINAWA TIMES (Page 2) (Full)
July 11, 2009

U.S. Consul General in Okinawa Kevin Maher held a press conference on July 10 ahead of his departure from the post. In it, Maher made the following comment regarding a master plan specifying details of (the return of) the six facilities south of Kadena Air Base, that have been agreed upon between the governments of Japan and the United States as part of the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan, "I don't know the specific timetable, but (the master plan) will be announced in the near future." He indicated that (the master plan) will be made public early before the end of the year.

Under the realignment agreement, the master plan was supposed to be announced in March 2007, but two years and three months have passed without such an announcement.

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About the scale of Camp Zukeran that will be returned, Maher reiterated the explanation that talks are underway in Tokyo between

Japan and the United States on matters, such as a plan for family housing. He said: "The Okinawa public might be skeptical (about the realization of the return (of the facilities)), but I personally think (the master plan) should be announced early. (The return of the facilities) will occur once Futenma Air Station and Guam relocation plans are successful."

The governor will be asked next year for authorizing landfill work for using surface areas for constructing a Futenma Air Station replacement facility. The consul general expressed a view that the governor will give his consent to the plan, saying: "The governor thinks force realignment will work favorably for Okinawa. He has not tried to obstruct the environmental impact assessment procedures. He has been cooperative."

Maher expressed his impression of his three-year assignment in Okinawa this way: "Okinawa residents' views on the security system have become pragmatic." He also developed his stock argument, noting: "In opinion polls, the base issue came fifth, sixth after the economy, employment and welfare as points at issue in elections. I don't think all frictions are gone, but I think many people in Okinawa have become aware that the U.S.-Japan security arrangements work to Okinawa's advantage."

(6) Lower House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Kono confirms secret nuclear accord with ex-Vice Foreign Minister, to demand change in government reply

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Top play) (Full)
July 11, 2009

In connection with the alleged secret agreement between Japan and the U.S. at the time of the revision of the bilateral security treaty in 1960 that allows U.S. ships and aircraft carrying nuclear weapons to stop over in Japan. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Taro Kono met with former Administrative Vice Foreign Minister Ryohei Murata in Kyoto on July 10 and confirmed the existence of this secret agreement with him directly. Kono wants the Lower House Foreign Affairs Committee to formally demand a change in the government's reply to the Diet that denies the existence of such an agreement.

Kono told Tokyo Shimbun on the same day that Murata had confirmed the existence of a document related to the secret agreement "although he does not remember the details of the wording" and that there was a document handed down from one vice minister to the next. Kono said, "From now on, the government's reply to the Lower House Foreign Affairs Committee that 'the secret agreement did not exist' will be unacceptable," indicting his plan to demand a change in the government's reply.

He also revealed that the committee will pass a resolution demanding a change in the government's reply.

The government has consistently denied the existence of the secret agreement after this was reported in the media.

At the Lower House Foreign Affairs Committee on July 1, Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone has given the following reply: "Previous prime ministers and foreign ministers have denied the existence of

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the secret agreement. The introduction of nuclear weapons by the U.S. forces requires prior consultation, but the U.S. government has never requested consultation." Director General Kazuyoshi Umemoto of the North American Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated: "I have never seen the so-called secret agreement and has never briefed the foreign minister on this."

If a resolution is passed at the Diet, it is highly possible that the government will be forced to change its reply. According to Kono, in response to the request for him to testify at the committee as an unsworn witness, Murata said that, "It will be difficult for me to go to Tokyo for personal reasons," but he was positive about Kono and others traveling to Kyoto to question him.

Murata served as administrative vice minister for foreign affairs for about two years from 1987.

(7) Russian president suggests negotiating Northern Territories issue based on return of only two islands

SANKEI (Page 1) (Full)
July 11, 2009

Takao Sato, Moscow

According to an Interfax report, Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev indicated at a news conference held after the G-8 L'Aquila Summit in Italy on July 10 that the Japan-Soviet Joint Communiqué (signed in 1956) will be the basis of negotiations on the Northern Territories issue. This document stipulates the return of the islands of Habomai and Shikotan to Japan after the signing of a bilateral peace treaty.

This shows that the Russian position remains unchanged from that during the previous Putin administration, attesting to the fact that there had been no progress made at the Japan-Russia summit meeting on July 9.

Medvedev stated at the news conference: "Russia regards the 1956 joint communiqué as the only legal document. Dialogue should be based on this document."

Russian sentiments toward Japan in connection with the Northern Territories issue have deteriorated rapidly after the Diet enacted the special measures law for the promotion of a solution to the Northern Territories issue, which stipulates for the first time that the Northern Territories are "an integral part of Japanese territory." There have been a number of demands in Russia to suspend negotiations on the territorial dispute and the "visa free exchange program" allowing the exchange of visits between Japanese citizens and residents of the Northern Islands. A mass rally has just been held in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk on July 10 to protest Japan's legal revision.

(8) Competition between Japan and Italy over Nasiriyah oil field development right

MAINICHI (Page 4) (Full)
July 12, 2009

Cooperation between government and private sector

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A Japanese consortium involving Nippon Oil Corporation (ENEOS) and an Italian firm are competing to secure the right to develop the Nasiriyah oil field in southern Iraq. Japan is aiming to secure the right in a joint effort between the government and the private sector, based on the bitter experience of losing the concession rights for the Khafji oil field in Saudi Arabia, the first oil field developed by a Japanese company. The Iraqi government will designate a contractor shortly. Since the Italian company is pulling out all the stops, the situation is still touch and go.

Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) Minister Toshihiro Nikai at a meeting with visiting Iraqi Oil Minister Husayn al-Shahrastani on July 9 made a remark backing Japanese companies' efforts to secure the Nasiriyah oil field development right. He indicated the government stance of assisting with construction of infrastructure in Iran, such as the building of railroads: "I would like you to confer on the matter with related companies. The Japanese government will provide full assistance."

Iraq, which is suffering from the aftereffects of the Iraq War, approved foreign companies' entry into the development of domestic oil and gas field so as to secure funds to finance the reconstruction of the nation. It carried out bidding for eight oil and gas fields in late June. Of those projects, a consortium formed by BP, the largest oil company in Britain, and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) was awarded the contract to develop the

Rumaila oil field, one of the largest oil fields in Iraq.

Bidding for the Nasiriyah oil field falls under a separate framework from bidding for those eight oil and gas fields. Consortiums of Japan, Italy, and Spain are negotiating with Iraq on the oil field's development. Iraq has narrowed down the bidders to a consortium of Japanese companies' formed by ENEOS (the largest domestic primary oil distributor), Inpex Corporation, and JBC Corporation (a major plant engineering firm); and Italy's Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi. Oil Minister al-Shahrastani on the 10th told reporters that he will reach a decision shortly, saying, "We have completed technical screenings. All we have to do now is financial adjustments."

Security of resources

Securing the Nasiriyah oil development right is of vital significance to Japan. Japan purchases almost all the crude oil it consumes on the oil market. Crude oil prices skyrocketed last year due to emerging countries' economic development and the influx of speculative money into the oil market, dealing a blow to the Japanese economy. It has now become difficult to secure stable supplies of crude oil due to mounting resources nationalism.

However, if Japanese companies secure rights to develop oil fields abroad, it will be possible for the nation to procure crude oil on a stable basis even in the event of an emergency. Oil fields, in which Japan has a large ratio of interest, are called "Japanese-flag oil fields." Arabian Oil's Khafji oil field is one of those oil fields.

However, Japan's interest in the Khafji oil field expired in 2000, when the Japanese side showed reluctance to accept a condition the Saudi Arabia set in renewing Japan's concession rights - building mining railways. Japan also transferred most of its interest in the Azadegan oil fields in Iran due to pressure from the U.S. to suspend the development of the oil field, making an issue with the nation's nuclear development.

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The government has set a goal to raise the ratio of oil produced from Japan-developed oil fields to imported crude oil to 40 PERCENT by 2030. According to METI, the ratio as of the end of 2007 stood at about 19 PERCENT. For this reason, securing the Nasiriyah oil field development right is an important issue in terms of energy security as well, according to ENEOS executive. It is also Japan's long-held ambition.

Fifty-fifty chance

In a bid to secure the Nasiriyah oil field development right, Japan's consortium has proposed that it help Iraq to build infrastructure, such as oil refineries and power plants, and provide financial assistance through the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). ENEOS Chairman Fumiaki Watari said in confidence, "I have some leads."

ENEOS has independently developed oil fields in the North Sea and in the Gulf of Mexico. Daily outputs from those oil fields total 130,000 barrels. Daily production of 600,000 barrels is expected from the Nasiriyah oil field. An ENEOS executive expressed his hopes, saying: "There will be no other opportunity for Japan to become involved in the development of an oil field on this scale." Domestic demand for oil is bound to drop. However, the company wants to lead this opportunity to a pillar of earnings, since overseas demand, mainly in emerging countries, is solid.

According to a related source, Japan was ahead of Italy as of May. However, Italy reportedly made additional proposals regarding conditions. The chances of the Japanese consortium to win the development right are said to be about fifty-fifty.

(9) Profile of John Roos, U.S. ambassador-designate to Japan

Five hundred thousand dollars for France, 100,000 dollars for the UK, and 500,000 dollars for Japan: These are the respective amounts of political donations raised by the people appointed by U.S. President Barack Obama as ambassadors to the above countries in the past presidential election. However, these are merely figures known to the mass media. It is quite possible that the sums of money actually collected might be much more substantial.

There is no denying that the foremost reason why John Roos, 54, was appointed by President Obama as the next ambassador to Japan is that this was a reward for his services in the election campaign. Just like ambassador-designate to France Charles Rivkin, president of an entertainment company in California, and ambassador-designate to the UK Louis Susman, a former bank executive, there is nothing in the career history of this topnotch Silicon Valley lawyer that suggests connections with Japan or any diplomatic experience.

Roos was born in San Francisco. He joined the California bar after graduating from the Law School of elite Stanford University in 1980. Setting his eyes on Silicon Valley near his university -- an area enjoying an IT industry boom -- he joined a local law firm and became involved in corporate mergers and acquisitions. In 2005, he became the CEO of that law firm, which counted Google and other major companies among its clients.

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Roos has had no experience in public service and has had little media exposure, so his personality is little known. A Yomiuri Shimbun correspondent approached him directly at his house in an exclusive residential area near Silicon Valley in late May, but he would not say anything at all, telling the reporter he had "no comment" on his appointment as ambassador. He was wearing casual attire, a white shirt and dark blue trousers, and was driving his Toyota Prius to take his son to school. The impression one gets is not that of a capable lawyer but that of an ordinary American dad.

However, he has a long record of support for the Democratic Party. In 1984, soon after he became a lawyer, he took off from work for one year to concentrate on campaigning for former Vice President Walter Mondale, who was running for president. He had been a supporter of Obama even before he announced his candidacy. He has built a close relationship with Obama and can pick up the phone and call him anytime.

It is said that there are three types of U.S. ambassadors to Japan -- first, experts on foreign policy or Japan, such as former Harvard University Professor Edwin Reischauer and former Under Secretary of State Michael Armacost; second, heavyweight politicians, such as Mondale and former House of Representatives speaker Thomas Foley; and third, individuals who do not have diplomatic experience but are close to the president, such as former Ambassador Thomas Schieffer, who is a close friend of former President George Bush.

Needless to say, Roos belongs to the third type. The State Department had at first endorsed Harvard University Professor Joseph Nye, a renowned international political scientist, but the White House pushed Roos. This can be said to be a case of type three shoving aside type one.

While type three is rather rare among ambassadors to Japan, for the United States as a whole, there have been many cases of supporters being given ambassadorial posts after a presidential election.

For sure, there has been no lack of criticism.

The American Academy of Diplomacy, a private group formed by former diplomats, recommends reducing the ratio of inexperienced ambassadors from the current 30 percent to about 10 percent. David Rothkopf, researcher at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, voices the following criticism on Roos' appointment: "This sends the message (to Japan) that political fundraising is more important than expertise in diplomatic exchanges with the number two economy in the world and an important ally in East Asia."

For now, the Japanese government welcomes Roos' appointment. Chief

Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura said, "He enjoys the great confidence of the President, and this is a sign of the importance attached to the Japan-U.S. alliance." However, it is unclear how helpful a personal relationship with the president will be for the job of ambassador.

Former Ambassador Schieffer was instrumental in arranging a meeting of the families of the abduction victims with President Bush, but he was unable to stop the president from removing North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. When an ambassador differs with the home government in Washington, the president gives priority to the home government's policy in most cases. Roos has even less

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political and diplomatic experience than Schieffer, who had been a politician at the state level and the ambassador to Australia before coming to Japan. He will need to develop his own views on the Japan-U.S. relationship before anything else.

According to gossip in Washington, Roos has purchased a large number of books on Japan and is studying very hard. We will have to see the outcome of his studying. It is believed that Roos will arrive in Japan around the fall, after obtaining Senate confirmation of his appointment.

POST